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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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2006 Governor's Conference on Tourism & Recreation Opens April 10 in Great Falls

Helena, MT – March 29, 2006 – Want to be “in the know” about one of Montana’s fastest growing industries and a leading economic generator for the state? If so, join Montana’s movers and shakers in the tourism and recreation industry in Great Falls April 10-11, 2006, for the 32nd Annual Governor’s Conference on Tourism and Recreation. The deadline for early registration is Friday, March 31st. “I encourage all persons involved in tourism and recreation, and interested Montanans, to join us as we look at this important issue to our state,” Governor Brian Schweitzer said.

Headlining the conference will be three national tourism experts featuring topics including exploring Montana’s tourism potential and identifying opportunities for growth, analyzing national and regional trends and in turn how Montana can respond to changes in the marketplace and lastly, a review of “immutable rules” for successful tourism.

In addition to the national speakers, the two-day education and networking conference features Montana presentations on research, local and regional tourism project updates, selling Montana-made foods and products to visitors, developing cultural tourism experiences and products and fun, informative field trips around the Great Falls and Fort Benton areas.

Governor Brian Schweitzer will address the conference at the April 11th luncheon. Montana Department of Commerce Director Anthony Preite will present the statewide tourism awards at the April 11th evening banquet. The awards will recognize the Tourism Person of the Year, Tourism Community of the Year, Tourism Event of the Year and the Tourism Partnership of the Year.

Conference registration, agenda, special events and Great Falls area lodging information are available at <http://travelmontana.mt.gov/conference/> or by contacting the Montana Department of Commerce Travel Montana program, 841-2870, or vbjornberg@mt.gov. The registration fee is \$120 prior to March 31st. After that date it increases to \$140 through April 7th, and to \$160 through the end of the conference.

Tourism and recreation is a leading Montana industry serving 10 million non-residents visitors and many Montanans in 2005. The non-resident visitors spent approximately \$2 billion in 2005, helping support 29,000 Montana jobs and generating over \$531 million in income.